

WEST HARTFORD SENIOR CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMISSION

Minutes November, 18, 2014

Members present: Ray Guenter, Robert Kennedy, Ruth Kurien, Connie Melo, Ellen Phillips, Donna Sterling, and Philip Walker
Members Absent: Linda Hanson
Council Liaison: Shari Cantor
Staff present: Susan Huleatt, Gina Marino
Guests: Jim Doran, Kevin Farmer, Don Jensen, Mark McGovern, Mary Silverberg
Volunteer Secretary: Amy Lynn Silverman

Chairman Philip Walker called the meeting to order at 10:30AM.

The Minutes of October 21, 2014 were approved unanimously.

Chairman's Report

Philip Walker welcomed the guests. He noted that Essie Labrot has requested the 2015 calendar from the Commission. Phil will provide that to her with a date change to accommodate the Jewish Holidays. Phil, Connie Melo, Donna Sterling and Robert Kennedy attended the West Hartford Senior Centers' Candidates Luncheon. The candidates do recognize that seniors vote more than any other age group. Shari Cantor asked Phil to invite Julianne Roth to a future meeting to speak about wellness and balance. Phil has been in touch with Kathleen Faroni to see if Noreen Bachteler is still interested in becoming a member of the Commission. Ellen Phillips will be following up with Margaret Murphy, Associate Director of the Center for Medicare Advocacy, about coming to a future meeting.

Transportation

Ruth Kurien introduced Kevin Farmer, the new part-time ITN Executive Director, who addressed the Commission. He noted that the primary values of ITN are freedom and dignity. ITN's mission is to support sustainable, community-based transportation services for seniors and visually impaired adults by building a transportation network and promoting lifelong safety and mobility. 15 towns are now served but only a segment of the need is being met. Many affiliates in comparable areas are larger and some have paid drivers. In providing "arm through arm and door to door service," ITN is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year. Rides may be given for any need. The member fee is \$40 per year for an individual; \$65 for a family. Members are charged for each ride at \$3 per pick up and \$1.50 per mile. Volunteer driver Don Jensen has been driving for about 5 years and is also a Board member. He helps with walking but will not/cannot lift because of liability. He can help with shopping. Drivers use their own cars. He indicated that his "pay" is giving back to the community. Mary Silverberg, member-rider, uses several transportation services and feels ITN is "more than just a ride." It was suggested that Kevin look into getting handicapped permits for the volunteer drivers. Driver recruitment is vital for ITN to be able to grow.

Town Council Report

Shari Cantor reported that the budget for 2015-16 is being projected. The challenges are controlling wages of the unions and health and retirement benefits. The Town is still in negotiation with the police. She spoke about MDC and the negotiation that is taking place regarding the sewer fee for the Town. The School Board has seen a slight decline in enrollment. Right now the budget increase is 5%; however, the Council is working on bringing that down. The upcoming Department of Environmental Protection mandates about cleaning storm water will impact all towns.

Mark McGovern, the Director of Community Services, spoke about “Complete Streets” which means rebuilding and redesigning from the points of view of all users. The goal is to develop policy. He hopes to have a draft of the town plan by the end of the year which will be presented to all stakeholders. 35% of the 217 miles of streets are rated poor or very poor. Each year 6 to 8 miles are redone.

Senior Job Bank

Jim Doran reported that there are approximately 500 service providers now with 800 people needing help. He shared two charts specifying requested activities (highest is handyman-general, then driving) and the number of requests by town and month (averaging 100 per month.) The SJB is now in every town previously served by the former SJB. Donations slightly exceed expenses. The office software is being upgraded.

Human Services

Susan Huleatt reported that there have been an unprecedented number of notices for water shut off. The Town that Cares does help with this need. It is expected that there will be less funding for heating needs this year. The schedule for the volunteer CHOICES staffer is full. The Elmwood Kitchen has taken over providing hot Thanksgiving meals to people who are alone. Staff is in “Holiday” mode and will be working with a number of organizations to provide for children, low income individuals and seniors.

Senior Center Reports

Gina Marino reported that the Entertainment Showcase was a success with \$5,000 raised. Monica who has coordinated this event is moving. The Candidates Luncheon was sold out with 120 people in attendance. The West Hartford/Bloomfield Health District conducted programs on Ebola and Sodium. Bertucci’s is doing a fundraiser with 15% of the total bill coming to the Center. The third in the series of Conversations on Aging will deal with making the holidays less stressful. Upcoming events include: Bagel Breakfast with Shari Cantor; In the Know with Renee McCue, town public relations; Travel Program Highlights; a Classical Christmas; a party with Fellowship Housing; Latkes and Legends; a New Year’s Eve Soiree; trips to Radio City Music Hall and to the Nutcracker at University of Hartford. Gina noted that the Farmers’ Market, organized by the Bishops Corners Neighborhood Association, made money.

The two Senior Centers will be getting new step machines.

New Business

Phil reminded the members to join the Senior Centers. He asked the Senior Center Directors to provide written notes for their oral reports.

The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled for December 16, at 10:30am.

The meeting adjourned at 12:03PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Lynn Silverman
Volunteer Secretary